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**PRINTING INDUSTRY
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Providing regional printing association members
a printing industry outlook view and actionable knowledge.

Branding Your Firm as a Good Place to Work:
Employer Branding

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Introduction

Association leaders often ask printing company leaders, “What is your greatest challenge?” A response they often hear is, “Staffing our company.”

I recently visited a printing company with about 100 employees. Everybody in the building was in their late 50s or early 60s. Multiple workers mentioned that they were considering retiring. As we were hearing those retirement comments, the firm’s leader shared, “And we are not getting any applications for our open positions.”

Filling open positions is not a problem for just our industry. Baby boomers make up about 20% of our population.¹ As more baby boomers retire, the percentage of our population participating in the workforce is declining as companies still need employees. These supply and demand factors are creating an increasingly competitive labor market, which enhances the need for branding your firm as a good workplace, “employer branding,” as we call it.

We start by defining and explaining two key concepts: an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and Employer Branding. We then present a model that illustrates our findings. We close with survey participants' responses to open-ended questions about their employer branding approaches.

We knew our survey would open some printing company leaders' eyes. Indeed, in responding to “What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to showcase your company culture and attract new talent?” a printing company leader replied, “None- the survey is painful.”

It's assumed that all printing firms are having hiring problems. However, multiple firm leaders reported that they are satisfied with their firm's recruitment of new employees, and they apply the concepts we describe below.

Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

When thinking strategically, it is vital to precisely identify the value your firm provides for its target market. Likewise, in today's competitive labor market, it is vital to specifically identify the value your firm will provide employees. An EVP states that value and reflects what rewards, benefits, and gains employees will receive from their committed effort to serve the company. Those rewards, benefits, and gains include both monetary and nonmonetary items. One should not view EVP elements as separate pieces as they are meshed to attract, retain, and engage employees.

An EVP may persuade an employee to stay with a company or persuade someone to join a company. Better said, an EVP may encourage membership in a firm's team. To achieve this, an EVP must focus on what the target market (potential

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/296974/us-population-share-by-generation/>

applicants and current employees) values. In addition, an EVP must differentiate the firm from competitors, other firms seeking to hire the same candidates. Objectives for having an EVP include attracting the best talent, retaining good employees, and reducing the time and financial investment in recruiting.

An EVP may include many different elements. Here are a few:

- Compensation/reward system.
- Benefits that promote employee (and family) wellbeing.
- Career development through training and opportunities.
- An organizational culture to which quality employees can relate, which may include values reflected in the firm's history.

We drew the following EVP examples from Harver's website.²

- Yelp – *'We believe in giving our employees the tools and resources to keep them healthy, wealthy, and wise. Whether it's a gym subsidy, unlimited snacks, or healthcare benefits, we believe happy employees are successful employees.'*
- Bain & Company – *"Picture yourself at one of the world's best places to work, surrounded by teams and people who challenge you, support you, and inspire you to be extraordinary."*
- Trader Joe's – *"We prioritize the development of our crew members. We don't pigeonhole crew members into "only running the register" or "only stocking the shelves"; our crew engages in a variety of tasks and holds a range of responsibilities—running the register and stocking the shelves, of course; also merchandising, creating signs, accepting deliveries, demoing products, and engaging with customers."*

Firm leaders must determine an effective EVP for their firm. Brainstorm... consider multiple possibilities. But that thinking effort may not provide value unless your EVP is effectively written, totally committed to by leaders, and communicated to both potential applicants and current employees, leading us to employer branding.

² <https://harver.com/blog/employee-value-proposition-examples/>

Employer Branding

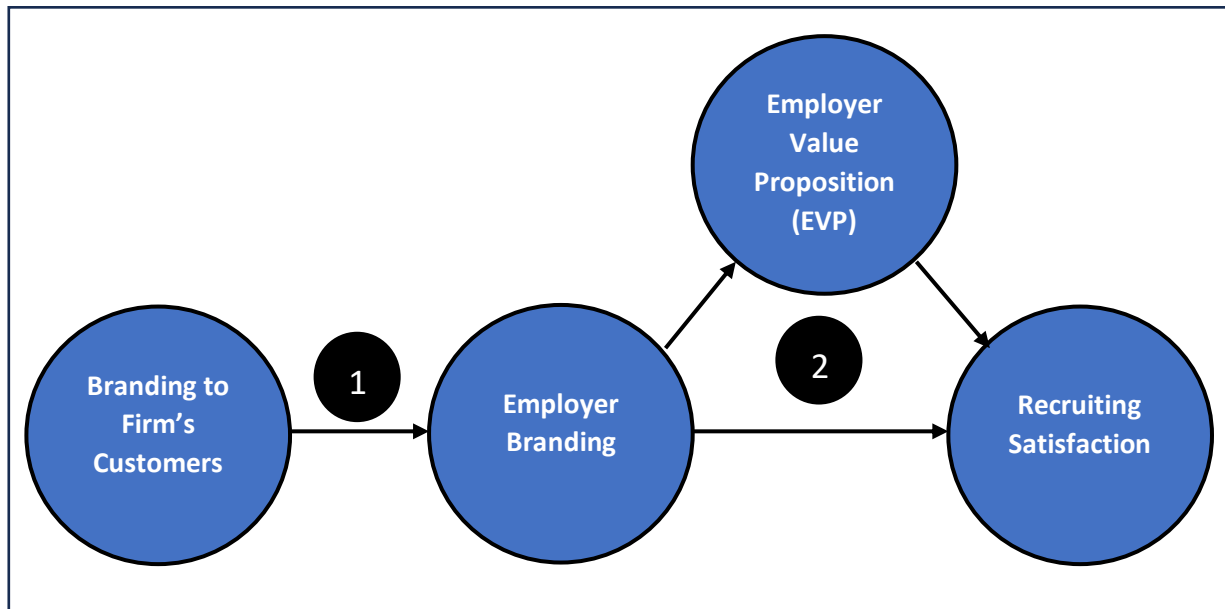
"Employer Branding" is communicating your company's reputation as an employer and the value it brings or what it offers current and potential employees. Firms can use various outlets for employer branding, such as websites, social media, and high school or college events. Through outlets, firms may post videos of employees, managers, or company leaders highlighting what the firm provides employees. A plethora of potential messages are communicated through employer branding, such as the following:

- Good compensation
- Continuous training
- Advancement opportunities
- Work-life balance
- Company accomplishments
- Company philanthropy and community service
- Employee accomplishments/stories
- Diversity
- Interesting products and services
- Culture/values
- Mission/vision
- The firm's unique attributes
- New technology acquired and applied
- Company awards, such as regional print competitions
- Company events, such as lunch meetings or picnics
- Company reputation
- What employees love about a company
- And, of course, employer branding may share the EVP.

Our Findings

Our findings are illustrated in the model below. There are two relationships in our model. The first is the relationship between “branding to firm’s customers” and

“employer branding” – see number 1. The second is the relationship between three elements: “employer branding,” “EVP,” and “recruiting satisfaction” – see number 2.



The first relationship, number 1, shows branding to customers as an antecedent to employer branding. An antecedent is something that exists before or logically precedes another. A firm needs to engage in branding to its customers to have the skills and experience to engage in employer branding. If your firm needs to engage in employer branding, you might step back and assess the extent to which your firm engages in branding to customers.

The second relationship shows that employer branding will enhance a firm's satisfaction with its recruiting. But that will only occur if the firm has an EVP. Without an EVP, employer branding will have little or no effect on recruiting satisfaction.

The EVP is a strategy for how you are approaching recruitment. An EVP focuses on your employer branding strategy and leads to higher recruiting satisfaction. Without an EVP, “you are just doing stuff” in employer branding.

Bottom line... employer branding can boost your recruiting satisfaction if your firm has branding capabilities developed through branding your company to customers... and if you have an EVP.

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Seeking ideas for how to conduct employer branding, we sought thoughts from printing company leaders for the four questions below, followed by responses. Illustrating the need for attention to EVP and employer branding in our industry, multiple printing company leaders answered “None” to the questions below.

How does your business incorporate its values and mission into its employer branding to resonate with the next generation of employees?

- Quarterly company meetings
- Verbal reinforcement
- We do a great job of sharing our values with current employees, but we need to work on sharing it when hiring.
- "Love Thy Neighbor" community program...
- Hired new, young marketing staff to address this and rebrand our company.
- Focus on work-life balance, allowing flexibility to WFH (work from home) where applicable two days/week, better vacation plans, training, and promotion from within.
- Great culture
- Quality of Service
- Vision Statement (and including them in creating it)
- All culture and setting good examples.
- Onboarding process
- We are employee-owned, and we try to communicate that as much as possible.
- EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System from Gino Wickman's book, "Traction."³)

³ <https://www.eosworldwide.com/traction-book>

- We hold quarterly town halls, provide shirts, and hold lunches... over-communicate.
- When I am trying to attract an employee, I let them know I am kind, and I am going to be fair.
- Part of our mission statement mentions helping the community we work in.
- Family comes first.
- A Poster in the Entry Way
- During recruitment, company meetings, daily conversations
- Marketing on Instagram
- Our business embeds its values and mission directly into its employer branding by maintaining an open dialogue with our stakeholders. By actively listening to our employees and the wider community, we align our branding with the values that resonate most with the next generation of employees. This ensures that our organizational culture and external messaging are consistent, authentic, and resonate with potential recruits.

What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to showcase your company culture and attract new talent?

- Website, social media, trade shows
- We have an outside HR Consultant/Recruiter...
- We have published videos and content on the web and social media.
- Money & Profit-Sharing Retirement Incentives
- YouTube videos within the job postings
- Website update, documenting an employee-friendly version of our brand mission, vision, values, and guiding principles. Training classes for all employees...
- Partnership with hiring agencies
- Webinars/Open Houses/E-news and blog articles
- Coffee chats
- Interaction with schools and colleges
- We are employee-owned, and we try to impress that on new recruits.
- Videos
- Social media networking

- College intern day with graduates we've hired.
- We self-nominate and continue to be nominated for business awards, including the BBB Torch Award for business ethics.
- Dare to be different.
- Culture is part of our yearly strategic initiative...
- Company activity videos
- A pillar of our company is the belief that our employees are the most authentic representatives of our culture. Through our careers page and various social media platforms, we prominently feature both video and written testimonials from employees across different departments, sharing their unique experiences, growth trajectories, and the reasons they cherish being a part of our organization. In addition, we actively host and participate in industry-specific events, workshops, and webinars, underscoring our unwavering commitment to continuous learning, collaboration, and knowledge dissemination. Furthermore, our monthly employee spotlights shine a light on the diverse and skilled individuals within our team, highlighting their achievements, passions outside of work, and the invaluable contributions they bring to our collective mission.

How do you utilize digital platforms and social media to reach and engage with potential new employees?

- Indeed, website hiring.
- Our outside HR Consultant/Recruiter handles this...
- Facebook and Indeed
- Occasional posts to various platforms that aren't solely focused on equipment or projects, hoping potential employees will be attracted to the culture and values.
- LinkedIn, Facebook
- We are active on LinkedIn and frequently share posts about company meetings, career fair attendance, and team events.
- Facebook, Instagram
- We use LinkedIn and Twitter (X)
- LinkedIn, Google, Facebook

- Share our business accomplishments and being very involved in giving back to our community.
- Videos - LinkedIn & Facebook
- Our company makes the most of digital platforms and social media by creating targeted campaigns aimed at potential new hires. Through platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter, we share company updates, spotlight employee achievements, and post about available job opportunities. Additionally, we highlight our company events, which allow potential candidates to get a firsthand sense of our company's ethos.

Can you share examples of unique employee benefits or programs that set your business apart from competitors and appeal to the new workforce?

- Longevity Bonus, profit share, PTO bank
- Annual Bonus, monthly meal, after 90 days you receive 40 hours PTO plus a pay increase based on what you learn and accomplish, 12 paid Holidays, Company pays 60% of medical insurance after 60 days, and Company paid events like ball games, bowling events, etc.
- Environmental consciousness with observable activities and success.
- ESOP and 401K contributions
- Chaplain program to provide comfort in difficult situations.
- Dogs allowed at the workplace.
- 100% Company Funded Employee Profit Sharing & Retirement Accounts. 80% Company Paid Employee Health & Medical Insurance
- Three weeks paid vacation for all employees, four weeks in year 5. anniversary, birthdays off
- Paid Volunteer Time
- Feed them every day, cash profit sharing, loan program, workout room...
- Monthly company lunches, where we give shirts and useful things six times a year.
- Apprentice program
- Our ESOP plan is employer-funded.
- Bonus program
- I am kind to employees - even when they make a mistake(s). We share meals together. I am flexible with time off.

- Our employees do not leave because we are a friendly, diverse company.
- Large bonuses, work on cool projects, don't micromanage, well-kept secret.
- Offer to donate or help any non-profits employees are passionate about.
- Equal Pay - i.e., give gas cards, pay for telephones, it's worth more than salary.
- Do good work - get paid well.
- Our culture initiative is very strong. We consistently communicate what we are working on, do a Gallup survey yearly, and have goals to meet those numbers. We have a profit-sharing program that focuses on all employees, not just the highly paid ones.
- Hybrid work, flex schedules, growth opportunities
- Our company is firmly anchored in the belief that nurturing talent is fundamental to our success. Recognizing the potential in individuals new to the industry, we've curated accelerated training programs specifically designed to fast-track their professional development. These programs are not mere formalities; they come with genuine opportunities for rapid advancement. We view each investment in our people as paramount, often likening it to planting seeds for a prosperous future, a testament to our bullish stance on human capital development. Understanding the importance of molding the future, we provide a plethora of internship opportunities. These internships are not mere placeholders but are strategically positioned to cultivate the next generation of talent for pivotal roles within our organization. Furthermore, we are staunch advocates of maintaining a harmonious work-life balance. Recognizing the varied needs and challenges faced by our employees, we offer flexibility in work schedules, ensuring that while our business thrives, our people do too, both professionally and personally.

There's a plethora of thoughts presented in the responses above. Does every one of the points perfectly fit your organization... No! However, you may find the thoughts shared by printing company leaders above helpful in refining your EVP and your employer branding strategy, which together will help you fill current open positions and build a stronger foundation for your company's future.

We hope you find the knowledge provided above helpful. If you have any suggestions or questions related to this report or the PIPI studies, please email Ralph Williams at ralph.williams@mtsu.edu

Participating Regional Printing Associations

FGA – Florida Graphic Alliance

GLGA – Great Lakes Graphics Association

GMA – Graphic Media Alliance

PGAMA – Printing and Graphics Association Mid-Atlantic

PGCA - Print & Graphic Communications Association

PIA – Printing Industry Association

PIAG – Printing & Imaging Association of Georgia

PIAMA – Printing and Imaging Association MidAmerica

PIAS – Printing Industry Association of the South

PIASD – Printing Industry Association of San Diego

PICA – Printing Industry of the Carolinas

PIMW – Printing Industry MidWest

PINE – Printing Industries of New England

PMA – Print Media Association

VMA – Visual Media Alliance